

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method of a multiplayer gaming reward system, comprising:  
  
providing a pool of two or more gaming machines; selecting one or more of the gaming machines from the pool at a predetermined reward time;  
  
determining an operational state of the selected gaming machine; and  
  
rewarding a player responsive to the operational state of the selected gaming machine at the predetermined reward time.
2. The method of claim 1, including:  
  
randomly selecting the selected gaming machine.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining an operational state of the selected gaming machine includes:  
  
determining that the selected gaming machine is in use by the player; and  
  
determining that the player has associated a unique player identifier with the selected gaming machine at the predetermined reward time.
4. The method of claim 3, including:  
  
denying a reward to the player if the selected gaming machine is in use and the player has not associated the a unique player identifier with the selected gaming machine at the predetermined reward time; and

communicating to the player that the reward has been denied.

5. The method of claim 1, including:

indicating to a player that the multiplayer gaming reward system is available at one or more of the pool of gaming machines.

6. The method of claim 1, including:

repeating the selection of the gaming machine from the pool at predetermined time intervals; and

predetermining the time intervals based on at least one of: current time of day, current day of week, current day of year, number of gaming machines available, number of gaming machines in use, length that at least one of the pool of gaming machines have been in use, length of at least one prior time interval, awarding of a reward at a previous reward time, identity of selected gaming machine at the previous reward time, presence of players at the gaming machines, number of players at the gaming machines, and available reward value.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of rewarding a player responsive to the operational state of the selected gaming machine includes:

providing the player with a reward of at least one of: cash, player incentive points, and complimentary goods or services.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the step of providing the player with at least one of: cash, player incentive points, and complimentary goods or services includes:

determining that the player has associated a unique player identifier with the selected gaming machine at the predetermined reward time; and

providing the player with a reward responsive to the unique player identifier.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of rewarding a player responsive to the operational state of the selected gaming machine at the predetermined reward time includes:

announcing the reward to the player of the selected gaming machine to at least one other player using at least one of: an indicator associated with the selected gaming machine, an indicator associated with each gaming machine in the pool, and an indicator available to players at gaming machines not included in the pool.

10. An apparatus of a multiplayer gaming reward system, comprising:

a pool of at least two gaming machines, each gaming machine having an operational state and being in communication with a central control system; and

wherein the central control system selects at least one of the gaming machines at a predetermined reward time and provides a reward to a player of the selected gaming machine responsive to the operational state of the selected gaming machine at the predetermined reward time.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the central control system randomly chooses the selected gaming machine from the pool of gaming machines.

12. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the gaming machines are adapted to accept a unique player identifier and the reward is provided to the player of the selected gaming machine responsive to the unique player identifier associated with the selected gaming machine at the predetermined reward time.

13. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the reward is at least one of: cash, player incentive points, and complimentary goods or services; and the reward is provided to the player of the selected gaming machine by at least one of: a human attendant, the central control system, and the selected gaming machine.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the player has an associated unique player identifier and the reward is provided to the player of the selected gaming machine responsive to the unique player identifier and the operational state of the selected gaming machine.

15. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the reward to the player of the selected gaming machine is announced to at least one other player using at least one of: an indicator associated with the selected gaming machine, an indicator associated with each gaming machine in the pool, and an indicator available to players at gaming machines not included in the pool.

16. The apparatus of claim 10, including at least one informational indicator adapted to inform a player that the multiplayer gaming reward system is available in connection with one or more gaming machines.

17. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the predetermined reward time is repeated at predetermined time intervals, the predetermined time intervals being predetermined responsive to one or more of: current time of day, current day of week, current day of year, number of gaming machines available, number of gaming machines in use, length that gaming machines have been in use, length of at least one prior time interval, awarding of a reward at previous reward time, identity of selected gaming machine at previous reward time, presence of players at the gaming machines, number of players at the gaming machines, and available reward value.

18. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the operational state of the selected gaming machine may indicate: that the selected gaming machine is in use, that the selected gaming machine is not in use, or that the selected gaming machine is in use but the player has not associated a unique player identifier with the selected gaming machine at the predetermined reward time.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the selected gaming machine being in the operational state indicating that the selected gaming machine is in use but the player has not associated a unique player identifier with the selected gaming machine at the predetermined

reward time results in denial of the reward to the player and communication of the denial to the player.